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Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on knowledge management in the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Knowledge management in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2007/6).

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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Knowledge management in the United Nations system

JIU/REP/2007/6

Main findings and conclusions

- There is little understanding of what "knowledge" is in the context of the United Nations system. Knowledge Management (KM) is perceived differently by different organizations. Furthermore, the perception of KM within the organizations surveyed is not uniform and there are diverse levels of sophistication in the understanding of KM and its role and importance within a given organization, as well as within the United Nations system.

- KM is a wide concept involving the processes of identifying and collecting relevant information and knowledge currently available, its classification and storage, timely dissemination and updating. The storage and management of knowledge is costly; additionally, the amount of information and knowledge available within the United Nations system is considerable. Thus, in order to increase the efficiency of a given organization, the updating of knowledge should also include processes for the elimination of outdated, redundant or irrelevant knowledge gathering and management activities.

- KM in the United Nations system is in its initial stages. The status of development of KM throughout the rest of the United Nations system is comparable to that of the Secretariat. Most of the findings, conclusions and recommendations in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on KM within the Secretariat[1] are very similar to those outlined in this review for the United Nations system as a whole. This is not surprising, given the early stage of development of KM, both within the Secretariat and across the United Nations. However, there is an important difference between this review and the OIOS report. While OIOS recommends that the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) produce a KM strategy for the United Nations system, the Inspector is convinced that the most that can be asked of CEB is the formulation of common definitions, terminology and general standards and guidelines on KM. This is because the clients of each entity in the United Nations system vary widely; the nature of the work, the knowledge requirements and the available resources for KM also vary greatly across the organizations of the United Nations system. This report includes new elements necessary for the development of individual KM and knowledge sharing (KS) strategies.

- There are many different and unconnected KM projects currently in place within the United Nations system; those quoted by the surveyed organizations have been included in annex III for information purposes. Generally, they are the result of personal and ad hoc initiatives, and are not part of a comprehensive KM strategy. The starting point for the development of a KM strategy is a review of clients'

[1] Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the thematic evaluation of knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration (E/AC.51/2006/2)

knowledge requirements (what do our clients need?); this should be done for both internal and external clients; the second step would require the undertaking of an in-house knowledge inventory (what do we already have available?); the subsequent comparative analysis of client needs versus the in-house inventory should identify existing information overlaps and gaps. The KM strategy should address these; establish what tools should be used to gather, store, update and disseminate information; determine the resource requirements and cost them out; and finally, the strategy should include the processes and tools necessary to evaluate and measure KM activities, thus justifying the different outputs.

- The Inspector is convinced that if such comprehensive information reviews were carried out by each organization and its the results incorporated into a strategy, substantial savings could be achieved by eliminating the gathering, processing and dissemination of information for which there is currently little or marginal demand. On the other hand, an analysis of "information gaps" that users currently have, or can be anticipated to have in the near future, would help to better identify the types and areas of knowledge that will be required by a given organization, and resources could be channelled for the purposes of gathering that information.

- The ultimate objective of KM is to improve organizational and staff performance. Regardless of the present unstructured approach to KM, all the organizations surveyed perceive its potential value and identified it as an important driver for improving organizational performance. KM is also seen as a vehicle that can facilitate and promote change in the existing management culture, and accelerate innovation within organizations. The Inspector is convinced that knowledge can grow exponentially when shared, contributing to improved organizational performance; he shares the perceptions of the organizations in this respect.

- The Inspector fully shares the view expressed by OIOS that the effective utilization of a primary United Nations system asset — its knowledge — is critical to meeting the objectives of the different system organizations. Information in the form of reports and other documents, combined with the research, analysis and expertise of staff, are the primary resources the organizations uses to facilitate progress towards the achievement of organizational goals. "The challenge remains to systematically and efficiently develop, organize, share and integrate knowledge to achieve those cross-cutting goals."[2]

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, through its High-level Committee on Management, should develop:

(a) A common definition of knowledge management to be used by all United Nations system organizations;

(b) A glossary of common terminology, which can be used in the development of knowledge management strategies and initiatives;

(c) A minimum common set of guidelines to be used as the basis for each United Nations system organization in the development of its own knowledge management strategy.

[2] Ibid.

Recommendation 2

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should:

(a) Survey the knowledge needs of the clients (internal and external) of their organizations;

(b) Undertake an in-house knowledge inventory for each organization;

(c) Identify and address the potential knowledge gaps existing between the clients' needs and the knowledge available within each organization;

(d) Develop, or revise, the knowledge management strategy of their organization, based on the above points and on guidelines to be developed by CEB.

Recommendation 3

The General Assembly and the respective governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should make the necessary provisions for the establishment of dedicated knowledge management units within each organization. The knowledge management units should be provided with the necessary financial and human resources, according to the dimension and specific needs of each organization.

Recommendation 4

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination should review the possibility of developing a common search engine, which can facilitate interoperability and access by the different organizations within the system to knowledge and information, including intranets and databases, available across the United Nations system.

Recommendation 5

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should establish knowledge-sharing competencies as one of the criteria to be assessed in the staff performance appraisal system.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CPC	Committee for Programme and Coordination
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HLCM	High-level Committee on Management (of CEB)
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICT	Information and communications technologies
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IT	Information technologies
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
KM	Knowledge management
KS	Knowledge sharing
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
RBM	Results-based management
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNLP	United Nations laissez-passer
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations system operates in a world of increasing demand for information in most of its sectors and areas of concern. Information is at the centre of most of the activities undertaken by the United Nations and the organizations of the common system, and it is vital for the successful implementation of programmatic activities, as well as for those of a normative nature. In this respect, the role of the United Nations system, as a source of structured information, or knowledge, is expected to reach unprecedented visibility in the global information society.

2. In this context, two concurrent phenomena have a significant effect on how a complex and multidimensional organization like the United Nations operates. The first is the significant advance of information and communications technologies (ICT), which allow organizations to manage large amounts of information in an unprecedented way, through the processes of identification, gathering, storage, processing, analysis and timely dissemination of relevant data and information.

3. The second aspect has to do with the preservation of institutional memory. The way in which institutional memory is captured, preserved, updated and disseminated has a strong impact on the efficiency of organizations. This is of special importance for the United Nations due to two main factors: the first is the anticipated retirement of a considerable number of managers, commonly known as "the baby boom generation", and the second is the increasing demand for flexibility and mobility of staff across the system.[3] Enhanced mobility will require new and enhanced mechanisms to manage institutional memory. There is an evident need for effective staff induction processes that can facilitate the mobility of staff, not only within the Secretariat but also across the different organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system.

4. In recognition of these phenomena, many corporations, as well as public organizations, have reconsidered the way in which they manage the knowledge that they need to satisfy their clients, whether internal or external, in an efficient and effective manner. Although the management of knowledge is as old as humanity itself, it was not until the early 1990s that the combination of a structured approach to the acquisition of knowledge, and the emergence of new technologies, were joined to coin the concepts of "knowledge management" (KM) and "knowledge sharing" (KS).

5. This new approach to the handling of information was undoubtedly facilitated by the extraordinary rise of the Internet, coupled with the spin-offs of intranets, extranets, portals, blogs, etc., which have created an enormous networking potential that drives society and organizations in terms of speed, interdependency and global access, allowing for the creation and spread of information instantaneously throughout the world.

6. The United Nations is no exception in this respect and several diverse KM/KS initiatives have sprung up across the United Nations system. In an effort to get a better grasp of this phenomenon, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), at its forty-fifth session, requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to conduct a thematic evaluation on KM networks.[4]

7. The evaluation conducted by OIOS[5] examined how the Secretariat, funds and programmes share knowledge, within and among themselves, both generally and within the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The focus of the OIOS evaluation was on the Secretariat,

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[3] An example of this is the new staff mobility policy developed by the United Nations Secretariat.

[4] The Committee recommended the theme "Knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration" for the next thematic evaluation by OIOS, see A/60/16 and Corr.1, para. 186.

[5] Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the thematic evaluation of knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration (E/AC.51/2006/2).

and its review did not include an assessment of KS with external partners, nor did it examine the capacity-building needs of Member States in KM.

8. In its report, OIOS reached the following main conclusions:

(a) There is no common understanding of KM or KS in the Secretariat

(b) Knowledge and information are often confused KM is typically associated with disseminating information

(c) KS in support of the MDGs is not sufficiently strategic, focused or well integrated with organizational objectives

(d) Mechanisms and processes for capturing and transferring good practice, lessons learned and knowledge from departing staff are generally inadequate

(e) Technology for KS is generally available but not always used

(f) Many networks supporting the MDGs are personal and ad hoc. While important, they are only partially effective. Staff point to the positive impact of knowledge networks, such as improving efficiency, reducing duplication and improving work quality however, direct measurement of network results is limited

(g) In the Secretariat, the knowledge-sharing culture is not always open, senior leadership support is limited, incentives and rewards are lacking, few organizational KM strategies exist and there are minimal, if any, dedicated knowledge-sharing resources

(h) Staff interest in sharing knowledge around the MDGs is high, and departments are beginning to develop initiatives to support staff interest in using knowledge to do their jobs more effectively.

9. OIOS made six recommendations, as follows: address specific issues in a system-wide strategy; tasking the Secretariat Task Force on Knowledge Sharing with developing a Secretariat knowledge-sharing strategy; develop a knowledge-sharing pilot project around report production; designating a dedicated Secretariat unit for facilitating and guiding KS; incorporating KS into the performance appraisal system; and including a knowledge sharing component in the staff development programme. This report deals with KM activities from a system-wide perspective and complements the previous review undertaken by OIOS on the thematic evaluation of KM networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration.

II. METHODOLOGY

10. The methodology used in the preparation of this report was divided into two phases. Phase one was an extensive survey of the literature on the subject of KM, with a view to determining the state of the art of this concept and its applicability to the United Nations system. Phase two consisted of a data collection exercise through the use of three different questionnaires, which were circulated among the specialized agencies (see annex I). Two questionnaires were addressed to the organizations, while the third was sent to three randomly chosen individuals with managerial responsibilities from each of the participating organizations.

11. The first corporate questionnaire was designed to assess the current understanding of what KM is in the surveyed organizations. The objective of the second corporate questionnaire was to ascertain the following: whether there is a common understanding of the term knowledge management and what it consists of; the perception of the need to apply KM in the various organizations of the United Nations system; the understanding of KM strategies, structures and initiatives; the formal and informal circuits used for the implementation of such initiatives; the supportive factors and barriers in the development of KM activities, etc. The third questionnaire was used to identify informal initiatives, and to cross-check and gather information on the views and perceptions regarding KM of individuals with managerial responsibilities. The data obtained through the questionnaires were subsequently analysed and validated. Details on the results of the questionnaires are provided in annex II.

12. The methodology followed has several limitations. This evaluation is not a comprehensive assessment of all knowledge-sharing mechanisms and practices in the United Nations system, and focuses primarily on those elements considered of greatest relevance, by the organizations and individuals surveyed, for a sound implementation of KM across the system. The Inspector hopes that this report will help in pointing out the path to follow in the future development of KM/KS strategies and in guiding related activities across the United Nations system, in particular, those of the inter-agency task force on KM established by the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) through its High-level Committee on Management (HLCM).

13. Comments from participating organizations on the draft report have been sought and taken into account in finalizing the report. In accordance with article 11.2 of the Joint Inspection Unit statute, this report has been finalized after consultation among the Inspectors so as to test its conclusions and recommendations against the collective wisdom of the Unit.

14. To facilitate the handling of the report and the implementation of its recommendations and the monitoring thereof, annex IV contains a table indicating whether the report is submitted to the organizations concerned for action or for information. The table identifies those recommendations relevant for each organization, specifying whether they require a decision by the organization's legislative or governing body or can be acted upon by the organization's executive head.

15. The Inspectors wish to express their appreciation to all who assisted them in the preparation of this report, and particularly to those who participated in the interviews and so willingly shared their knowledge and expertise.

III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. No common or comprehensive understanding of knowledge management

16. There is no single definition of "knowledge" on which scholars agree, but rather, there are numerous theories and continued debate about the nature of knowledge. A definition of knowledge, in the context of this review, is: "Knowledge is [the universe of] what is known. ... Knowledge acquisition involves complex cognitive processes: perception, learning, communication, association, and reasoning. The term knowledge is also used to mean the confident understanding of a subject, with the ability to use it for a specific purpose."[6]

17. The Inspector believes that for clarification purposes there is a need to differentiate between the meaning of knowledge, information and data in the context of this report. In this respect: "Data are discrete, objective facts about events, including numbers, letters, and images without context. Information is data with some level of meaning. It is usually presented to describe a situation or condition and, therefore has added value over data. Knowledge is built on data and information and created within the individual [or the organizational unit]. Knowledge, of course, has many levels and is usually related to a given domain of interest. In its strongest form, knowledge represents understanding of the context, insights into the relationships within a system, and the ability to identify leverage points and weaknesses and to understand future implications of actions taken to resolve problems."[7]

18. Ten out of thirteen of the organizations surveyed provided a definition of what they consider KM to be. The Inspector is convinced that the other organizations, which did not provide a definition for KM, have indeed some concept to define it. However, most of the definitions provided show that knowledge and information are often confused; in fact several organizations see KM just as a part of their global ICT strategy, and associate KM activities mainly with disseminating information.

19. The definitions of KM given by the surveyed organizations are diverse, and none of them was comprehensive. Their disparity clearly highlights the need for a common understanding and a common definition of KM across the United Nations system.

20. In the view of the Inspector, KM seeks to understand the way in which knowledge is used and traded within organizations. The Joint Inspection Unit included a definition of KM in the context of a holistic implementation of results-based management (RBM). "There is a growing awareness among the organizations about the need for embracing knowledge management as a key management support tool, which can be used to reinforce and complement RBM since both have the ultimate goal of making organizations more effective, thus improving their performance. Organizations could successfully implement RBM without the need to put in place a knowledge management strategy or vice versa, although the Inspectors are of the view that a concerted implementation of both concepts would be mutually reinforcing."[8]

21. Knowledge management can be defined as the systematic processes, or range of practices, used by organizations to identify, capture, store, create, update, represent, and distribute knowledge for use, awareness and learning across the organization. "Knowledge Management programs are typically tied to organisational objectives and are intended to achieve specific

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[6] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge

[7] C.W. Holsapple, ed., *Handbook on Knowledge Management 1: Knowledge Matters*, (Springer, 2003).

[8] Implementation of results-based management in the United Nations organizations, Part I, Series on managing for results in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2004/6).

outcomes, such as shared intelligence, improved performance, competitive advantage, or higher levels of innovation."[9]

22. KM is a cross-cutting organizational issue that encompasses different areas of activity within any organization. KM, when properly implemented, has a direct influence on the information technology (IT) systems chosen, and requires action from, inter alia, technical and substantive departments, human resources management and libraries and public information units.

23. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the coordination of KM activities within the United Nations system, and should be considered in the context of the work to be carried out by the Task Force on Knowledge Sharing and in accordance with the recommendations made by OIOS, in particular its recommendations 1 and 2.[10]

Recommendation 1

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board, through its High-level Committee on Management, should develop:

(a) A common definition of knowledge management to be used by all United Nations system organizations;

(b) A glossary of common terminology, which can be used in the development of knowledge management strategies and initiatives;

(c) A minimum common set of guidelines to be used as the basis for each United Nations organization in the development of its own knowledge management strategy.

B. Knowledge management strategy

24. Most of the organizations surveyed lack a formal KM strategy. While all the organizations surveyed for this report develop and disseminate information and knowledge in one way or another, they do not generally undertake this task in a purposeful, comprehensive and coordinated manner. However, most of them have different and unrelated KM initiatives in place, or they have plans to launch KM initiatives in the near future. The initiatives currently in place result mainly from the need to provide an answer to specific issues or requirements, and are not part of a holistic and coordinated approach to KM. In the view of the Inspector, this piecemeal approach is just a reflection of the early stages of the implementation of KM within any organization; the United Nations system is not an exception in this respect.

25. It is to be noted that just a few United Nations system organizations have been mandated by their respective governing bodies to develop a KM strategy. Only four organizations claim to have a formal KM strategy. One of these indicated that it had drafted a KM strategy but had still to make it public; the three others mentioned elements that should be part of a strategy but, as defined in this report and after having checked the evidence provided by the organizations, the Inspector has reached the conclusion that none of them has a clear strategy for managing knowledge. In some cases, there is a lack of the elements necessary to constitute a thorough strategy, such as the human resources management component or the systematic evaluation and measuring of KM initiatives. The organizations did not identify categories of information requirements (internal and external) or link these requirements to the needs of the different types of potential users or customers.

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[9] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_management

[10] Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the thematic evaluation of knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration, E/AC.51/2006/2, paras. 72 and 73.

26. Any comprehensive strategy for the development of KM/KS activities should provide answers to the following basic questions:

(a) What is the knowledge required by the organization and its clients?

(b) What is the knowledge available within the organization?

(c) What knowledge, therefore, needs to be gathered?

(d) With whom is it to be shared, how and when?

The answers to these questions will form the basis for future KM strategies.

27. None of the organizations surveyed has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the knowledge and information needs of their clients (internal and external). This analysis should be supplemented by an in-house knowledge inventory,[11] which in the view of the Inspector is one of the preliminary steps to be taken in any KM strategy. The in-house knowledge inventory determines what information and skills are available within the organization. It is to be noted that tacit knowledge should also be part of the knowledge inventory. The subsequent comparison of the needs of its clients, with the information and knowledge available in-house, points out the knowledge gaps that the organization should fill in order to be able to satisfy its clients properly.

28. The Inspector wishes to highlight the clear differentiation that any KM strategy should establish between the needs of internal and external clients. These two major categories could be further broken down; for example, the internal client category can be further classified into different subcategories, such as senior management, middle management, different types of technical staff with very specific knowledge and information needs, administrative staff, staff at large, interns, consultants, etc.

29. The same classification exercise should also be undertaken for those clients considered to be external by the organization, such as Member States, other international organizations, universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations, the public at large, suppliers, etc. The classification into internal and external clients, and the further subdivision within each of these two main groups, may determine what knowledge is to be made accessible to each of the different categories and/or subcategories of clients. It is to be noted that the external clients of the organizations are also potential suppliers of knowledge, thus organizations are both suppliers and consumers of knowledge.

30. It is evident that different categories of clients have different knowledge and information needs; thus each client group should be able to access knowledge according to their specific needs and through the most appropriate means for each category. The classification of clients into different groups should also have a direct impact on the data and information security policy of any given organization. Confidential knowledge, information and data should be protected through different access controls and security mechanisms that permit access only to authorized users. In this respect, the Inspector would like to highlight the need to link information technology and knowledge management strategies.

31. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the efficiency of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

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[11] In this context, some organizations use other equivalent terms instead of knowledge inventory, such as knowledge audit or knowledge mapping.

Recommendation 2

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should:

(a) Survey the knowledge needs of the clients (internal and external) of their organizations;

(b) Undertake an in-house knowledge inventory for each organization;

(c) Identify and address the potential knowledge gaps existing between the needs of clients and the knowledge available within each organization;

(d) Ensure that each organization develops, or revises, its own knowledge management strategy based on the above points and on guidelines to be developed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board.

C. Knowledge management and information and communications technologies

32. KM is mainly about organizational culture, people and technology, however "the bulk of the KM literature, and its most accessible part, is about computer systems and applications".[12] This, among other factors, has contributed to a certain misunderstanding of what KM is about. However, in the view of the Inspector, the phenomenal advance and availability of ICT, which has radically changed the way in which knowledge is created, stored and shared, has led to confusion between what is shared (knowledge) with the means used to share it (ICT). Technology is just a tool to facilitate KM. Some organizations relate, and often confuse, KM with ICT; in fact, the majority of the organizations surveyed have placed the responsibility to develop KM initiatives under the umbrella of ICT units, and few organizations claim to have dedicated KM units.

33. The Inspector agrees with the views expressed by OIOS, which noted in its report that the ICT function in the United Nations is an important enabler of knowledge, as it is in other knowledge-based organizations. "In none of the organizations benchmarked by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, however, was knowledge management responsibility given solely to a technology unit (all have a separate and dedicated knowledge management office)."[13] A successful KM strategy should encompass the multidimensional and cross-organizational nature of KM.

34. In the view of the Inspector, the management component of KM is of greater importance than technology in the sound implementation of KM initiatives. "Technological tools are leverage points for sharing knowledge and should be a part of a larger effort to change practices, processes and behaviours."[14] The Inspector believes that the responsibility for the development of knowledge initiatives should be given to specific KM units, which should work in close cooperation with technical and substantive departments, as well as with other organizational units such as ICT, human resources, library and media, and units dealing with the organization's strategic planning and budget, all of which are key for the development of effective KM strategies.

35. The different governing bodies of the United Nations system have already affirmed the importance of KM as a tool to enhance organizational efficiency; however, in most of the system organizations, there are no provisions for the establishment of dedicated KM units.

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[12] C.W. Holsapple, ed., *Handbook on Knowledge Management 1: Knowledge Matters*, (Springer, 2003).
[13] E/AC.51/2006/2, para. 55.
[14] Idem.

36. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the efficiency of the United Nations system.

Recommendation 3

The General Assembly and the respective governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should make the necessary provisions for the establishment of dedicated knowledge management units within each organization. The knowledge management units should be provided with the necessary financial and human resources, according to the dimension and specific needs of each organization.

37. The means used by organizations to share knowledge are diverse and most of them rely heavily on technology, thus the KM strategy of a given organization should be closely linked to its ICT strategy. In this respect, the Inspector is pleased to note that under the guidance of CEB, a system-wide ICT strategic framework has been developed, as part of an overall effort to strengthen system-wide coordination and the capacity to manage knowledge across the United Nations system.

38. CEB, through its High-level Committee on Management, has also established an inter-agency task force (Task Force on Knowledge Sharing) to shape a system-wide KM strategy. The task force met once in 2006 and is expected to continue its work in 2007.

39. The organizations surveyed indicated that current technology does not place any limitation on their capacity to implement KM initiatives, providing them with adequate IT systems to support KM. In fact, OIOS in its report came to the same conclusion, indicating that technology for knowledge sharing (KS) is available within the Secretariat but is not adequately utilized.

40. All organizations surveyed indicated the importance of the Internet, including chat rooms, intranets and extranets, as well as different collaborative web-based tools (e.g., Lotus Notes, diverse e-mail systems, communities of practice/thematic groups, etc.), as a predominant means of sharing knowledge, in combination with access to codified information in different databases.

41. In this regard, the Inspector would like to stress the need for enhanced coordination at the United Nations system level. There are numerous intranets and databases available within the system, but they are not easily accessible by potential users belonging to different parts of the system. There is a real need to integrate them in a secure and meaningful manner in order to create a common system repository of knowledge, information and data that can benefit the whole of the United Nations system. There is no need to create a new information system, but to connect the existing systems and databases in a meaningful manner through the use of a common search engine.

42. At present, United Nations system organizations are requested to identify and implement mechanisms to enhance cooperation, whether through their participation in multidimensional peacekeeping operations, or through joint development cooperation projects. In keeping with this emphasis on enhanced cooperation, there would be multiple applications and benefits from a common approach to KM/KS. A common approach could, for example, range from the sharing of information and materials on areas of common interest (e.g., country profiles and related data, best practices and lessons learned in development cooperation projects, results-based management, KM documentation, training kits, etc.) to the use of common system staff data. This could serve several applications, such as a new common e-recruitment system for all United Nations entities; security issues such as control of access to United Nations premises; or the issuing of United Nations laissez-passer and other documents.

43. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the coordination between the various funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

Recommendation 4

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board should review the possibility of developing a common search engine, which can facilitate interoperability and access by the different United Nations organizations to knowledge and information, including intranets and databases, available across the United Nations system.

D. Drivers and obstacles

44. Knowledge is an important asset in all organizations. Moreover, "knowledge is power" (Sir Francis Bacon, 1597) and people may often need to be encouraged to share knowledge. Changing people's attitudes and behaviours might be the most important obstacle to overcome when developing KM strategies within the United Nations system. The importance of an appropriate organizational culture for the implementation of a sound KM approach is reflected in several related studies. OIOS noted, "such a culture does not consistently exist in the Secretariat. A majority of respondents in departmental surveys rate the culture of sharing information and knowledge as only fair or poor, and most rate openness to sharing new ideas as fair or poor. Collaboration is also generally rated negatively. In contrast, the organizational culture at the divisional level appears to be somewhat better".[15]

45. A survey undertaken in 1998 among different private sector firms revealed that the three greatest challenges to implementing KM initiatives were changing people's behaviour, measuring the value and performance of knowledge assets, and determining what knowledge should be managed (Ruggles, 1998). By 2001, the second phase of the survey revealed that the top two challenges were still changing people's behaviour and measuring the value and performance of knowledge assets. Determining what knowledge should be managed had become less of a challenge, while a new challenge had moved up the scale of importance – justifying the use of scarce resources for knowledge initiatives.

46. Changing people's behaviour, or the development of an appropriate organizational culture which facilitates and encourages the sharing of knowledge, is considered by the United Nations organizations surveyed for this review to be one of the two most important factors supporting the implementation of KM. This coincides with the views expressed by private sector firms. The Inspector shares this view, and firmly believes in the need to include the development of an appropriate organizational culture as a fundamental element of KM strategies.

47. The above conclusion reveals the cross-cutting nature of KM and the importance of supportive management policies, necessary to address and direct the required change in organizational culture towards a more collaborative environment for the sharing of knowledge. This issue should be addressed through the establishment of adequate incentives for staff, and through the introduction of new elements within the individual performance appraisal system, which could encourage the sharing of knowledge.

48. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the efficiency of the United Nations system.

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[15] Ibid., para. 47.

Recommendation 5

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should establish knowledge-sharing competencies as one of the criteria to be assessed in the staff performance appraisal system.

49. While leadership support is also considered a very important supportive factor for the implementation of KM initiatives by the organizations surveyed, the lack of it is not considered a major obstacle within the private sector. However, the views expressed by the organizations coincide with those of the Secretariat and with the findings included in the OIOS report, which indicated: "Cultural limitations and lack of leadership support are among the most serious challenges identified by survey respondents. Less than half of survey respondents say that senior leaders place a very high or high priority on knowledge management."[16]

50. The main challenges indicated by the above-mentioned survey of the private sector are somewhat similar to those pointed out by the United Nations organizations in their responses to the questionnaires. The difference is, in the view of the Inspector, related to the different stages of development of KM/KS activities within the United Nations system and the private sector. He believes that the importance attributed by the organizations surveyed to challenges such as determining what knowledge should be managed, and the importance of leadership support - which are not major challenges at present in the private sector - is a proof of the early stage of development of KM/KS activities within the United Nations system, when compared with the leading firms of the private sector.

51. As discussed earlier in this report, the lack of a clear strategy or objectives, and the lack of understanding of KM/KS activities, are also considered to be major obstacles to the implementation of KM initiatives by the organizations surveyed.

[16] Ibid., para. 48.

Annex I: List of surveyed organizations

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

Annex II: Survey results

	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	6	7	-	-
	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	4	9	-	-
	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	-	9	-	-	-
1 year or less		•	-	-	-	-		-	-							15.38%	2
1 – 3 years			-	-	-	-		-	-	•		•				15.38%	2
3 – 5 years			-	-	-	-	•	-	-							7.69%	1
5 years or more			-	-	-	-		-	-		•		•			15.38%	2
Improving effectiveness	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-			92.31%	12
Promoting culture changes	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	•	•	•	•			76.92%	10
Accelerating innovation	•	-	•	•	•	-	•	-	-	•	•	•	•			69.23%	9
Improving client responsiveness	•	-	•	•	•	-	•	•	-	-	•	•	-			53.85%	7
Follow trend	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			0.00%	0
Others	-	-	-	•	-	•	-	-	-	•	•	•	-			38.46%	5
	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	11	2	-	-
Internet (websites, collaborative web-tools, etc)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			100.00%	13
Email	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	•			92.31%	12
Publications	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			100.00%	13
Face to face	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	•			92.31%	12
Collaborative Web-tools (Lotus-Notes, Email)	•	•	•	•	-	•	•	•	-	•	•	•	-			53.85%	7
Access to codified information in databases	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			100.00%	13
Communities of practice / thematic groups	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			92.31%	12
CD-ROMs	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	-	•	•	•	•			76.92%	10
By way of help desk	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	-	•	•	•	-			69.23%	9
Videoconferencing	•	-	-	•	•	•	•	-	-	•	•	•	-			61.54%	8
Videos	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	-	-	•	•	•	-			61.54%	8
Fax	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	-	-	•	•	•	•			69.23%	9
Telephone	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	•			84.62%	11
Others	-	-	-	•	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	•	•			30.77%	4

Budget / size (specific for KM)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	5	8	-	-
Less than 100,000	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.69%	1
100,000 – 500,000	•	-	-	-	-	•	•	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.38%	2
500,000 – 1,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.00%	0
1,000,000 – 5,000,000	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	15.38%	2
5,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	15.38%	2
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	9	4	-	-
Senior management	-	-	-	-	-	•	•	-	-	•	•	•	•	-	-	46.15%	6
Mid level management	-	-	-	•	-	•	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	-	-	61.54%	8
Staff at large	-	•	-	-	-	•	•	•	-	•	-	-	•	-	-	46.15%	6
	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	5	8	-	-
	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	3	10	-	-
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	6	7	-	-
	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	11	2	-	-
Internal	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	-	84.62%	11
United Nations system	•	•	-	•	•	•	-	•	•	-	•	•	•	-	-	61.54%	8
International institutions	-	•	•	•	•	•	-	•	-	-	•	•	•	-	-	69.23%	9
National institutions (Universities, Associations, etc.)	-	•	-	•	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	-	69.23%	9
Governments	-	•	•	•	•	•	-	•	-	•	•	•	•	-	-	76.92%	10
NGOs	-	•	-	•	•	•	-	•	•	-	•	•	•	-	-	69.23%	9
Other	-	•	-	•	•	•	•	-	-	-	•	•	•	-	-	61.54%	8
IT unit	-	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	•	-	•	•	-	-	-	61.54%	8
Substantive / technical departments	-	•	•	•	•	•	-	-	•	-	•	-	-	-	-	53.85%	7
Information / library department	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	38.46%	5
Dedicated KM / KS unit	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	•	•	•	-	•	-	-	30.77%	4
Human resources	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	15.38%	2
Finance	-	-	-	-	•	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.38%	2
Others	•	•	-	•	•	•	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38.46%	5

Supportive factors for the development of KM within organizations							
Agency head's attitude to KM / KS	**53.85%**	30.77%	-	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Focus of senior managers on KM / KS	**38.46%**	**38.46%**	7.69%	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Focus of middle managers on KM	30.77%	**46.15%**	7.69%	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Organizational culture	**53.85%**	15.38%	15.38%	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Linking of KM / KS to operational work	30.77%	**53.85%**	-	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Request from beneficiaries and clients	**23.08%**	15.38%	**23.08%**	**23.08%**	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Human networks / staff sharing common information needs	**46.15%**	30.77%	7.69%	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Specific rewards provided for KM / KS	7.69%	15.38%	**61.54%**	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Formal performance reviews including KM / KS as criteria	7.69%	23.08%	**46.15%**	7.69%	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Specific KM / KS training programmes	15.38%	**61.54%**	-	-	-	**10**	**76.92%**
Obstacles for the development of KM within organizations							
No financial support	23.08%	**38.46%**	7.69%	-	-	**9**	**69.23%**
Lack of incentives/rewards	-	**30.77%**	23.08%	7.69%	7.69%	**9**	**69.23%**
Lack of clear strategy or objectives	**53.85%**	7.69%	7.69%	-	-	**9**	**69.23%**
No environment for sharing	**23.08%**	30.77%	15.38%	-	-	**9**	**69.23%**
Internal politics/ rivalry	**30.77%**	23.08%	23.08%	-	-	**10**	**76.92%**
Lack of understanding of the initiative	**53.85%**	-	15.38%	-	-	**9**	**69.23%**
Legacy system	7.69%	**23.08%**	**23.08%**	7.69%	-	**8**	**61.54%**
Cultural differences	15.38%	7.69%	**38.46%**	7.69%	-	**9**	**69.23%**
Inter-agency politics/rivalry	7.69%	7.69%	**30.77%**	15.38%	7.69%	**9**	**69.23%**
Competitive pressure	7.69%	15.38%	**30.77%**	15.38%	-	**9**	**69.23%**
Geographic dispersion	7.69%	15.38%	15.38%	7.69%	**23.08%**	**9**	**69.23%**
Lack of trust in management	15.38%	15.38%	**23.08%**	-	15.38%	**9**	**69.23%**
Bureaucracy	7.69%	23.08%	**30.77%**	7.69%	-	**9**	**69.23%**

Rate of different dimensions of KM / KS within organizations							
Culture of KM / KS information and knowledge	-	30.77%	**46.15%**	7.69%	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Openness to sharing new ideas	7.69%	**53.85%**	23.08%	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Collaboration and team work	-	**46.15%**	23.08%	15.38%	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Senior level management support of KM and / or KS	**30.77%**	**30.77%**	7.69%	15.38%	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Mid level management support of KM and / or KS	7.69%	**61.54%**	15.38%	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
Staff willingness to share learning about what has worked well and what has not	7.69%	**53.85%**	23.08%	-	-	**11**	**84.62%**
System of incentives and rewards for KM / KS	-	-	23.08%	**30.77%**	7.69%	**8**	**61.54%**
Adequacy of tools and mechanisms for sharing knowledge	-	-	**38.46%**	7.69%	-	**11**	**46.15%**
Adequacy of IT systems to support KM / KS	7.69%	**53.85%**	15.38%	7.69%	-	6	**84.62%**
Integration of KM / KS in day-to-day work	-	30.77%	15.38%	**38.46%**	-	**11**	**84.62%**

Note: 13 Agencies = 100 per cent

Annex III: Examples of knowledge management initiatives, as indicated by the surveyed organizations

Below are examples of initiatives and networks that have been set up by the various United Nations agencies. The objective of this annex is to show the numerous KM initiatives within the United Nations system. There are probably many more that we did not manage to capture. It is important for each organization to bring these initiatives under an overall KM umbrella, based on an appropriate strategy.

FAO

- Department of Knowledge Exchange, Communication and Capacity building.
- Information system development activities.
- "Ask FAO"(information on best practices emerging from exchange with experts and other institutions through thematic networks, and from the experience of FAO's own programmes in member countries).

IAEA

- Asian Nuclear Safety Network (a network of 17 countries sharing knowledge and experience in nuclear safety).
- Latin America Nuclear Safety Network (a network of Latin American countries sharing knowledge and experience in nuclear safety).
- Latin American Nuclear Medicine Network (sharing knowledge and best practices in nuclear medicine).
- Task Force on Corporate Knowledge Management (to ensure a coordinated implementation of the corporate KM plan, gather information on corporate KM activities carried out by the various departments, and assist in the dissemination of best practices and information on appropriate KM tools).

ICAO

- EDEN (document management and tracking system, document repository).
- DPS (document production service).
- TRD (terminology database in six languages – reference system).
- ICAO NET.
- Staff web INTRANET (site for secretariat – staff information and document repository).

ILO

- Technical coordination and knowledge sharing on gender equality in the world of work (technical cooperation project).
- Participatory gender audits (methodology developed by ILO to assess its own and constituent's - governments, employers and workers organizations – achievements in promoting gender equality, capture good practices and offer recommendations on how to reinforce their work).
- ILO Global Gender Network (community of practice within which experiences and practices related to gender equality promotion are presented, shared and adopted).
- Informal Economy knowledge sharing project.
- Integrated employment creation knowledge sharing project.
- Knowledge as a strategic element in ILO - programmes and projects at all levels.
- Specific inter-regional and global projects on building and disseminating knowledge.
- Specific project on "Information system for a knowledge base on child labour".
- ILO global information network.
- Digitization project.
- Knowledge sharing network.
- KM4DEV (Knowledge management for development conference).

- Network of Evaluation Focal Persons in each ILO technical sector and region.
- Libraries and information centres in ILO.
- Knowledge sharing extranet for the Global Team of Job Creation and Enterprise Development Specialists.
- Learning and Resources Centre on Social Inclusion (CIARIS).

IMO

- IMO website.
- IMO Intranet.
- GISIS (Global Integrated Shipping Information System – several databases on shipping-related activities and related reporting by IMO Member governments).
- IMODOCS (restricted online access to documentation of IMO meetings).
- SAP (internal resource management system, including capture of programme data).

- IMO-affiliated websites (13 operational, regulatory or scientific sites dealing with IMO-related topics).
- IMO Intranet (19 forums and 10 applications shared internally).

- Performance indicators (compilation/analysis/dissemination of data on organizational performance).
- InfoGate and Sea-D (IMO library information).
- Electronic publications.
- Maritime terminology database.
- Ongoing development of a KM strategy and, possibly, a Management Dashboard, a Knowledge Centre and an Electronic Briefcase.

ITU

- ITU Library & access service (Information Inventory Project).

UNAIDS

- Sharing of best practices.
- Data management tools.
- Newsletter.
- Website.
- Global reports.

UNIDO

- EDMS (Electronic Document Management System).
- Intranet (web-based internal database).
- Agresso (Finance Management System).

UPU

- SIBI Project (information system for the international bureau of UPU).
- Organization and Quality management project (business process management).

WFP

- WFPgo (Intranet).
- Pass It On (projects and operations related lessons learned and other knowledge).
- Business Intelligence (Business Intelligence based on the corporate Data Warehouse).
- EPWEB (emergency preparedness website).
- ERMP (electronic records management programme at country office level).

WHO

- Global Learning Committee (GLC).
- eHealth (EHL).
- Communities of practice and knowledge networks.
- Clinical learning and data platforms in resource-poor settings.
- Capturing experiential knowledge in the WHO Intranet inforstructure.
- Promoting KM techniques and tools in WHO and health systems.
- HINARI Access to Research Initiative.
- Global Health Library.
- Regional Index Medici.
- Knowledge Sharing Culture (WPRO).
- Network of WHO libraries.
- Multilingualism in WHO.
- Blue Trunk Library (and related portable libraries).
- Copyright administration.
- Health Evidence Network.

WIPO

- Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) helpdesk (telephone, fax and e-mail support for all users).
- PATENTSCOPE.
- PCT Portal.
- PCT legal database.
- Archives of key texts.

WMO

- WMO technical library.
- UNCG inter-agency groups.
- Web forums, web news, and corporate documents management for WMO secretariat and WMO members.
- Press releases, briefings, information.
- World Meteorological Day (annual), MeteoWorld, Webnews.

UNWTO

- UNWTO Practicum (up-dating of knowledge in the area of tourism policy).
- UNWTO TedQual Certification (quality certification).
- UNWTO TedQual Volunteers.
- UNWTO Scholars.
- UNWTO Sbest Initiative.
- UNWTO related seminars, courses and think tanks.

Annex IV: Overview on action to be taken by participating organizations on JIU recommendations
JIU/REP/2007/6

			United Nations and its funds and programmes												Specialized agencies and IAEA												
		Intended impact	United Nations*	UNCTAD	UNODC	UNEP	UN-HABITAT	UNHCR	UNRWA	UNDP	UNFPA	UNICEF	WFP	CEB	ILO	FAO	UNESCO	ICAO	WHO	UPU	ITU	WMO	IMO	WIPO	UNIDO	UNWTO	IAEA
Report	For action			☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
	For information and review			☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recommendation 1		c												E													
Recommendation 2		g	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 3		g	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Recommendation 4		c												E													
Recommendation 5		g		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E

Legend: **L:** Recommendation for decision by legislative organ
E: Recommendation for action by executive head
■: Recommendation does not require action by this organization

Intended impact: **a:** enhanced accountability **b:** dissemination of best practices **c:** enhanced coordination and cooperation **d:** enhanced controls and compliance **e:** enhanced effectiveness **f:** significant financial savings **g:** enhanced efficiency **o:** other

* Covers all entities listed in ST/SGB/2002/11 other than UNCTAD, UNODC, UNEP, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNRWA.

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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on knowledge management in the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith, for the consideration of the General Assembly, his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Knowledge management in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2007/6).[1]

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

[1] Compiling the comments of CEB on reports of the Joint Inspection Unit requires extensive and frequent consultation with agencies throughout the system, which sometimes delays the production and submission of the report. CEB regrets any inconvenience this may cause.

08-50138 (E) 011008

Summary

The report of the United Nations system Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on knowledge management in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2007/6) examines issues relating to knowledge management activities within the organizations of the United Nations system.

The present report presents the views of the United Nations system organizations on the recommendations provided by JIU in its report. The views of the system have been consolidated on the basis of inputs provided by member organizations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) who welcomed the report, with many indicating that its timing coincides with their own activities in the area of knowledge management and sharing. Noting the difficulty of covering in depth a topic as broad as knowledge management, the organizations stressed that the recommendations did not always convey the complexity involved in developing a comprehensive knowledge management strategy and that some of the recommendations lacked a clear cost-benefits analysis to determine their viability. Nevertheless, the organizations appreciated the overall thrust of the report and expressed the view that it added significantly to this important area for the entire United Nations system.

I. Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit report on knowledge management in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2007/6) presents a review of the knowledge management activities in place within the organizations of the United Nations system. Noting the broad nature of the subject, the report focuses primarily on those elements considered of greatest relevance by the organizations and individuals surveyed for a sound implementation of knowledge management across the system. Among its observations, the review found a lack of a common understanding of knowledge management throughout the United Nations system and that many organizations did not have formal knowledge management strategies. The report goes on to note the role that information technology plays in the knowledge management arena and describes some of the obstacles and drivers for implementing a knowledge management programme. The five recommendations contained in the report, directed at executive heads (2), governing bodies (1) and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) (2), seek to enhance the coordination of system-wide knowledge management activities through the development of, inter alia, common terminologies and guidelines for the development of knowledge management strategies and to strengthen each organization's knowledge management activities by, inter alia, conducting knowledge inventories and developing knowledge management strategies.

II. General comments

2. CEB members, noting the difficulty of studying a topic as broad as knowledge management, welcomed the report, with many indicating that its timing coincides with their own efforts in this area. In their responses, the organizations stressed that the recommendations, while practical and direct, did not always convey the complexity of the challenges the organizations face when developing knowledge management strategies. Many noted that the report, which clearly described the differences between "information" and "knowledge" in its introduction, did not always communicate the importance of this distinction in its recommendations. For example, the organizations noted that the suggested approach to addressing knowledge management issues focused principally on the explicit knowledge in publications and databases, among others, without any significant consideration for knowledge of a more "tacit" nature, such as that embedded in the experience of staff members. Nevertheless, the organizations welcomed the broad thrust of the report, along with the annexes thereto which, they noted, presented a useful overview of knowledge management activities across the system. In addition, several agencies reported that they had derived much value from participation in the United Nations system-wide knowledge management task force, which is mentioned throughout the report, and had benefited from shared perspectives and lessons learned, thus enhancing the understanding of knowledge management issues across the system.

III. Specific comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1: CEB, through its High-level Committee on Management, should develop:

(a) A common definition of knowledge management to be used by all United Nations system organizations;

(b) A glossary of common terminology, which can be used in the development of knowledge management strategies and initiatives;

(c) A minimum common set of guidelines to be used as the basis for each United Nations organization in the development of its own knowledge management strategy.

3. The organizations recognize that system-wide agreements on the definition of and approaches to knowledge management currently do not exist, and therefore generally support the spirit behind this recommendation. Agencies note that the development of definitional frameworks and guidelines could bring much-needed clarity to the concept and boundaries of knowledge management, and emphasize the importance of continuous sharing of views and experience among United Nations agencies as the definitions and guidelines are put into practice.

4. However, while the organizations agree on the necessity and desirability of common definitions and guidelines, they question the role of CEB in this activity. In particular, they stress that the idea of CEB owning substantive work does not seem plausible as it lacks the capacity and resources to effectively produce those outputs and should instead focus its role on the coordination of the knowledge management activities carried out by the agencies. Furthermore, the organizations note that while developing those outputs, the system should remain conscious of and take steps to mitigate the risk that they may become too academic or general to be of any practical use and therefore should ensure that these outputs are developed with practical implementation in mind.

Recommendation 2: the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should:

(a) Survey the knowledge needs of the clients (internal and external) of their organizations;

(b) Undertake an in-house knowledge inventory for each organization;

(c) Identify and address the potential knowledge gaps existing between the needs of clients and the knowledge available within each organization;

(d) Ensure that each organization develops, or revises, its own knowledge management strategy based on the above points and on guidelines to be developed by CEB.

5. While CEB members broadly support this recommendation, many indicated that it lacks some key components. For example, the organizations suggested that subparagraph (c) of the recommendation should include the need to prioritize the knowledge gaps identified in the survey along with the identification of the knowledge source so as to validate the requirements identified. They further suggest that the activities embedded within this recommendation would be best integrated with strategic or other planning processes and be conducted with some regularity, since knowledge management requirements can evolve over time.

6. More significantly, the organizations took note that the suggested approach to creating a knowledge management strategy (survey needs, inventory existing capacity and identify and fill gaps) presents a simplistic view of how to address the

knowledge needs of an organization. They also noted that the analysis that underpins this recommendation appears to present knowledge and information as almost equivalent terms, and therefore runs the risk of conveying an incomplete picture of how to develop a knowledge management strategy. The recommendation, the organizations noted, does not mention the processes by which knowledge is acquired, mobilized and exchanged, and those processes can in themselves cause overlaps and gaps. Furthermore, the organizations stress that complying with this recommendation could take years and could entail substantial costs, as they would require establishing knowledge management units for that purpose (as proposed in recommendation 3), and as knowledge needs reorganizing and updating, the units would become permanent. Finally, they note that the challenges of changing people's behaviour to facilitate and encourage the sharing of knowledge could prove a difficult hurdle and should not be underestimated.

Recommendation 3: the General Assembly and the respective governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should make the necessary provisions for the establishment of dedicated knowledge management units within each organization. The knowledge management units should be provided with the necessary financial and human resources, according to the dimension and specific needs of each organization.

7. The organizations expressed limited and qualified support for this recommendation. They note that in many organizations knowledge management activities emanate from information and communications technology units and agree that a separate entity might facilitate the mainstreaming of knowledge sharing activities into the regular work of staff members. However, they point out that the report does not present any cost-benefit basis for a recommendation of this nature, despite the clear financial implications. In this vein, and given the limited resources available, the organizations took note that the report did not describe how knowledge management activities could proceed in the absence of a specific unit. Many organizations further expressed concern about the lack of clear guidance regarding the focus of those units, and many believe that while it might be useful to implement the recommendation, it should not be a precondition for developing and implementing a quality knowledge management programme, especially given the tight resource constraints under which the organizations are currently operating.

Recommendation 4: CEB should review the possibility of developing a common search engine, which can facilitate interoperability and access by the different United Nations organizations to knowledge and information, including Intranets and databases, available across the United Nations system.

8. The organizations support the concept of exploring the value and viability of creating a common search engine. They note that such a capability might facilitate interaction among organizations seeking synergies/complementarities and best practices in knowledge management. In particular, they note that a search solution, which leverages the indexing and search capabilities already in production, might produce faster results than a wholly new indexing and search engine. However, CEB members stress that this recommendation should also include the creation of an inter-agency network that extends knowledge sharing beyond common search capabilities and addresses some of the core issues related to the ability of the organizations to access information across institutional boundaries. Furthermore, they point out that a search engine alone, without the systematic organization of

content repositories and common metadata standards, will not improve user experience in searches. Finally, as noted in their responses to the other recommendations, the organizations believe that the inclusion of a business case that outlines the costs and benefits implications of a system-wide search would have been useful, since many agencies are not in a position to participate in new cost-shared activities unless they entail potential savings or significant efficiency improvements. Such a detailed analysis would include an assessment of whether or not existing search engines can fulfil the requirements of the United Nations system.

Recommendation 5: the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should establish knowledge sharing competencies as one of the criteria to be assessed in the staff performance appraisal system.

9. The organizations welcomed this recommendation as a critical component for the success of any knowledge management strategy. They took note of the need for a closer connection between knowledge sharing activities and staff performance, as well as for closer integration of knowledge sharing/knowledge management into their results-based management frameworks. Agencies also stressed that this recommendation might require incentives and opportunities for capacity-building of the required competencies along with an environment conducive to sharing knowledge. While many agencies indicated that they had already begun to implement components of the recommendation, others called for a more broad-based approach that would more fully address the obstacles that were identified by both the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its report on the thematic evaluation of knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration and the present report. Specifically, the organizations pointed to the cultural limitations that inhibit knowledge sharing within organizations as well as the lack of leadership support and of the incentives and rewards that encourage knowledge sharing.